



**Communication/  
Language**

**Exploring Words**

**Option 1** (IG) Toddlers participate in a book sharing about young children in a pretend rowboat.

**Option 2** (IG) Toddlers sing and act out key parts of a book about young children in a pretend rowboat.



**Cognitive**

**Solving Problems**

**Option 1** (OO) A toddler explores ways to play with identical wooden figure toys that can fit together.

**Option 2** (IG) Toddlers engage in open-ended play with wooden figure toys that can fit together.



**Self-Regulation**

**Focusing and Remembering**

**Option 1** (IG) Toddlers observe and describe the *Orange Circle* game of freeze.

**Option 2** (IG) Toddlers participate in a game of *Orange Circle*.



**Social-Emotional**

**Exploring Feelings**

**Option 1** (OO) A toddler participates in a book sharing focused on different feelings experienced by a little fox.

**Option 2** (OO) A toddler recalls and talks about different feelings experienced by a little fox in a book sharing.



**Physical/Health**

**Moving Our Bodies**

**Option 1** (IG) Toddlers explore and practice kicking a ball.

**Option 2** (IG) Toddlers practice kicking the same ball 2–3 times.

(OO)=One-to-One, (IG)=Informal Gathering



## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

**Receptive language**

**Expressive language**

Toddlers participate in a book sharing about young children in a pretend rowboat.



#### Key Concepts

Rowboat

Oar

Row

Lean

Forward

Back



#### Materials Needed

*Row, Row, Row Your Boat* by Annie Kubler

\*Picture as shown



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive

Physical/Health

\*Printables provided

**BEGIN:** [*Invite 3–4 toddlers to sit with you to read a book about some young children having fun in a pretend boat.*]

**ASK:** [*Show provided picture of a rowboat.*]

- Have you ever been in a boat that looked like this?
- What was it like?

**EXPLAIN:** [*Point to oars in picture when described.*]

This is a picture of a rowboat. A rowboat goes through the water when the oars are moved. Here is an oar. Here is another oar.



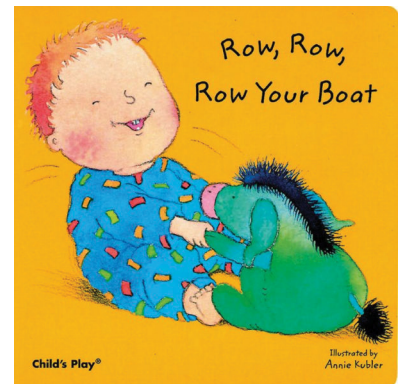
Moving the oars is called rowing. We use our arms to row. Let's pretend we are rowing a boat.

[*Demonstrate and then lead toddlers in rowing movements. Use exaggerated circle movements of your arms. Move your upper torso slightly back and forth as you move your arms.*]

The children in our book row their pretend rowboat with a friend. The cover of our book shows a child pretending to row with an animal friend.

[*Show and describe book cover. Demonstrate again with your upper body how we can lean back and forth while rowing.*]

Let's find out what happens to the children while they row their pretend boat. Our book is called *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.



**ACT:** [*Use the following strategies to share the book:*

- *Read a complete verse/sentence and then return to discuss the words and corresponding pictures.*
- *Point out how the children are rowing together in the first two pictures of the book (similar to the cover). Emphasize how one child leans forward and the other child leans back.*
- *Describe or define novel words or phrases, including the following:*

**Option 1 continued**

- *stream: like a small river*
- *gently: smooth ride on the water*
- *merrily: happily*
- *"life is but a dream": doing something we really want to do*
- *shore: the land at the edge of the water*
- *Draw attention to how pictures of the children show what the words say. Examples:*
  - *happy faces for rowing merrily*
  - *open mouths for screaming about crocodile*
  - *position of hands, fingers, and mouths for roaring at the lion*
  - *leaning to the side when rocking the boat*
- *Describe why the children would scream at a crocodile and roar at a lion. Invite toddlers to roar!*
- *Acknowledge and build on toddlers' comments and pointing.]*

**RECAP:** The children in our story had a fun time in a rowboat. What did they do?

### What to Look For—Option 1

This simple book is well suited for expanding and strengthening toddlers' understanding of frequently used words and phrases, including lean, forward, and back. It also is a useful book for talking about how pictures show what the book's words say.

Toddlers will differ in their familiarity with boats, especially a rowboat. The provided picture of a rowboat is important to discuss because there are no illustrations of a boat in the book.

In addition to showing and describing the picture of a rowboat, look for opportunities to help toddlers comprehend a short story that uses words many toddlers are unlikely to know. Even toddlers who can recite this traditional nursery rhyme from memory may not know what some of its words and phrases mean, such as "merrily" and "life is but a dream."

The activity description suggests reading an entire sentence (verse) before talking about what it means and how the pictures connect to the words. Watch toddlers' reactions carefully to determine whether they might prefer to read the book in its entirety before talking about specific words, phrases, and pictures.

The suggested conclusion of the activity supports toddlers' recall skills. The short book provides useful practice with this important cognitive ability.



## ***Option 1 continued***

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1

**Extra support** ■ Provide time on each page for toddlers to look closely at illustrations, and describe the crocodile and/or lion as appropriate. ■ Accentuate the rhyming words.

**Enrichment** ■ Point out that some words are said again and again: row, row, row; rock, rock, rock; merrily, merrily, merrily. ■ Point out that some words sound the same: stream, dream, scream; shore, roar.

## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

Receptive language  
Expressive language

Toddlers sing and act out key parts of a book about young children in a pretend rowboat.



#### Key Concepts

Rowboat  
Oar  
Row  
Lean  
Forward  
Back  
Sing



#### Materials Needed

*Row, Row, Row Your Boat* by Annie Kubler

\*Picture as shown

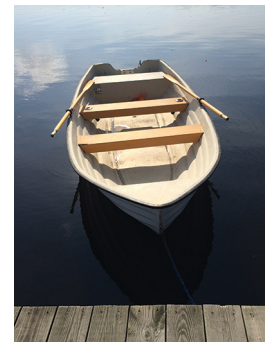
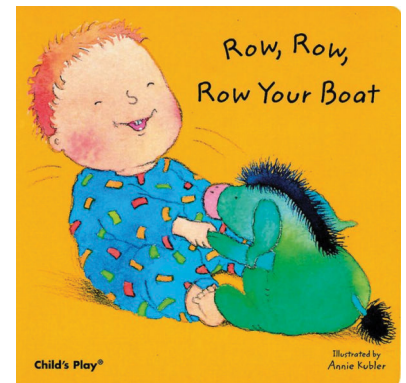


#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Physical/Health  
Self-Regulation

\*Printables provided

**Be Prepared:** This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the book's activity through participation in Option 1 or a similar book sharing. Be familiar with the tune and words of the first verse of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" (see back of the book).



Invite 3–4 toddlers to join you in singing and acting out the story of young children having fun in a pretend rowboat. Show and describe the provided picture of a rowboat, drawing attention to its oars and how the oars are used to move the boat on water. Read aloud the book as a reminder of the story. Point to words as you read them. Remind toddlers that our book has words and pictures. Point to examples of each.

Explain that we can move our bodies and say words included in the book. The words and pictures in the book tell us what to do. Read again the first sentence (verse) of the book, this time slowly, and lead toddlers in doing rowing actions. Use exaggerated circle movements of your arms, as if rowing a boat, and move your upper torso slightly back and forth as you move your arms.

At the conclusion of the first verse, briefly describe what happened. Emphasize how we leaned forward and back.

Explain that we can sing the words. Then repeat the first sentence in song while engaging in pretend rowing. Encourage toddlers to sing and row with you. Remember to sing slowly and enunciate clearly.

Demonstrate and describe a rocking action (moving from side to side) before leading toddlers in acting out the second verse ("rock, rock, rock your boat"). Encourage toddlers to scream about seeing a crocodile. Also, encourage toddlers to "roar" when they see a lion.

Acknowledge and expand on toddlers' comments.

Conclude the session by reminding toddlers that we leaned back, forward, and to the side. The words and pictures in the book told us how to pretend we are rowing a boat. We can say words, and we can sing words.

### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

This brief, straightforward activity has four potential benefits for toddlers:

- Leaning back, forward, and to the side can strengthen toddlers' understandings of these important concepts.

**Option 2 continued**

- The activity informally demonstrates how a book's words and pictures can serve as a resource for our actions.
- The activity reminds toddlers that words can be said as well as sung.
- Singing plus doing movements can strengthen skills in focusing and remembering.

Many toddlers are likely to sing the first verse of this popular nursery rhyme. The scream and roar opportunities in the second and third verses will appeal to most toddlers. Some toddlers may find it challenging to sing and do movements at the same time. Assure toddlers that it is fine to participate in ways they wish.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

**Extra support** ■ When you demonstrate rowing actions, position yourself with your back to the group. ■ Point to pertinent pictures of leaning back, forward, and to the side when leading toddlers in rowing actions.

**Enrichment** ■ Interested toddlers may enjoy holding hands and leaning in opposite directions with another toddler, as shown in the first two pictures in the book. ■ At the end of the song, ask toddlers to help you remember: "Did we move 'happily' or 'merrily' down the stream?" Do these words mean the same thing?

 **Interest Area**

**Materials needed:** water table with several toy boats, preferably in different sizes

As a follow-up to Options 1 or 2, invite toddlers to move a boat forward and back, and gently rock it from side to side. Remind toddlers that "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" includes these movements. Toddlers may wish to move the boats at faster and slower speeds in the pretend lake. Encourage toddlers to talk about where their boat is going and what is happening.

 **Family Child Care**

**Materials needed:** *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* by Annie Kubler

Preschool-age children may enjoy participating in Option 2 with toddlers. Babies may enjoy rowing and rocking on your lap as you sing the song. You may wish to offer an additional song/rhyme that children can act out, such as "Wheels on the Bus."



## 24–36 Months

Option 1  
One-to-One

## Skill and Goal

Problem-solving  
Object inquiry skills

A toddler explores ways to play with identical wooden figure toys that can fit together.



## Key Concepts

Fit together



## Materials Needed

Flockmen® wooden figure toys (see Be Prepared)  
Basket



## Also Promotes

Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** Flockmen® wooden stacking toys are an open-ended material often found in Montessori classrooms. A 16-piece set (“half flock”) is sufficient for this activity and recommended for children three years and younger. Place the items in a small basket. It is helpful to provide a cloth mat that helps prevent the pieces from slipping. A low table works best for a toddler to look at the items from different perspectives.

Invite a toddler to join you in playing with some people figures. Set the basket of items near, but not on, the mat or work space within easy reach of both you and the toddler. Take 3–4 items from the basket and encourage the toddler to do the same. Provide time for the toddler to explore the material by feeling and manipulating the items. Point out how the toys are the same by putting one toy on top of another.



Explain there are many ways to play with the toys. Pause for the toddler to respond with a comment or manipulation of the toys. Support the toddler’s play with the toys. Encourage the toddler to take more toys from the basket if he/she wishes. Avoid asking the toddler what he/she intends to do because there may not be a specific plan at an early stage of exploration.



If the toddler seems uncertain about how to play with the toys, offer one or more ideas by assembling your set as an example that you anticipate is well matched to the toddler’s building interests and fine motor skills. Some possibilities include the following:

- Put the figures in a row, close to each other in standing positions. Lightly touch a figure on the end of the row so there is a domino effect.
- Offer a slight variation on the above by putting the figures in a curve, close to each other in standing positions. Lightly touch a toy on the end of the curve. Draw attention to how there is a different type of domino effect.
- Form a circle of 6–8 figures in standing positions or flat on the table.
- Show how the figures can fit together (“hold hands”). Form a line of connected figures in standing positions or flat on the table.
- Create a three-tier stacking arrangement (all toys in standing positions), with three connected toys on the bottom, two connected toys in the middle, and one connected toy on the top. Emphasize how a toy is connected to the toy next to it and to the toy(s) above (or below) it.

**Option 1 continued**

These are examples only, listed by approximate levels of complexity. Support a toddler's interest in exploring the figures. A toddler may want to add to an arrangement you offer as an example. If a toddler copies what you offer as an example, ask if there are other things he/she would like to do with the toys, such as make a stacking arrangement higher or put the people figures together in a different way. Offer the items you took initially from the basket if the toddler wants to work with all 16 items.

Describe what happens, including the toddler's actions and the arrangement he/she creates. Example: In a domino effect, explain that one toy bumped into another toy that then bumped into another toy. Encourage the toddler to tell what happens.

Help the toddler solve a problem he/she may encounter in working with the material by stating the problem or offering an idea to explore. Examples: If a toddler's lined-up items do not fall in a domino effect as anticipated, ask whether he/she thinks the items were close enough together. If a tower falls, describe the problem and talk with the toddler about how to make the items stand up better. Allow plenty of time for a toddler to express ideas, experiment, or ask a question.

Conclude the activity by describing the toddler's efforts. Give less emphasis to what he/she created.

**👁️ What to Look For—Option 1**

Look for ways to encourage the toddler to look at, feel, and manipulate the items, especially in the early segment of the activity. An exploration of an item by itself and in relation to others will likely lead to the engaging problem of what to do with the toys. This is where you face the potential challenge of being supportive of the toddler's interests without directing the play. If it appears the toddler would benefit from an example to further his/her exploration, offer the example as an idea, not a finished product to copy. It is important for the toddler to own the play while also feeling your supportive interest. A toddler is likely to repeat an engaging process or result one or more times. Repetition can be more valuable than experimenting with many different ways to arrange the figures.

A turning point in a toddler's play is likely to occur when he/she discovers the figures can fit together. This opens the door to more complex building arrangements and also more advanced fine motor practice.

**📊 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

**Extra support** ■ Put fewer figures in the basket if you anticipate it may be too stimulating to provide the 16 available figures. Emphasize that it is not necessary to play with all items in the basket.

**Enrichment** ■ Show how a figure can stand when balanced on the head and one hand. This may prompt a toddler to consider how the toys can be arranged in unusual patterns.





## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal Problem-solving Object inquiry skills

Toddlers engage in open-ended play with wooden figure toys that can fit together.



#### Key Concepts

Fit together  
Play together



#### Materials Needed

Flockmen® wooden figure toys (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Physical/Health  
Communication/Language  
Social-Emotional

**Be Prepared:** This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the wooden figure toys through participation in Option 1 or a similar guided experience. Put the 16-piece set ("half flock") in a small basket. Provide a cloth mat for each child that defines his/her work space and helps prevent the pieces from slipping. A low table works best.

Invite two toddlers to continue their play with the wooden figure toys. Place the basket of figures in the middle of the table, with separate work space for each toddler. If necessary, provide a reminder that the figures are the same and can be used together in many different ways. Invite each toddler to show and tell what he/she likes to do with the figures. Encourage the toddlers to notice what each is doing. Explain that the toddlers are playing together with the toys. Describe briefly what each is doing and enthusiastically yet gently support any child-initiated joint work with the figures, such as creating an arrangement together.



#### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Most likely, toddlers will pursue their own explorations with the figures in a parallel-play format. It is valuable for a toddler to see what a peer is doing with identical materials. The observation may trigger another idea or lead to similar effort. If you notice Toddler A watching Toddler B use the figure toys in ways you anticipate Toddler A may not know how to do, suggest that Toddler B show Toddler A how to use the material. Example: fitting together the figures.

In a parallel-play format in this activity, toddlers are playing together in the sense of working with the same material at the same location. Jointly working on the same arrangement is unlikely to occur at this age, although you may see signs of movement toward a shared activity. Because the figure toys are identical, there will not be disputes about who plays with a desired shape, but there may be conflicts about control of the items. If this occurs, provide a rule that the figure toys are to stay in the basket until they are used in play (not hoarded by a toddler for possible later use). It may be necessary to take turns using some items if both toddlers wish to create arrangements that require lots of figures.

In addition to supporting peer interaction opportunities, look for ways to encourage each toddler to strengthen his/her skills in working with the figure toys by repeating a process of interest, preferably with variation, or by exploring a more complex way to work with the toys.



## Option 2 continued

### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

**Extra support** ■ Demonstrate how to fit together the figure toys if this is of interest to a toddler who has not played with the toys in this way. It is preferable for this demonstration to be offered by a peer, as suggested in What to Look For, but a peer may not be familiar with how items fit together or may not wish to demonstrate.

**Enrichment** ■ Encourage use of the figure toys in unusual arrangements, as suggested in the Option 1 Enrichment tip.

#### Interest Area

**Materials needed:** Flockmen® wooden figure toys, felt squares

Provide the figure toys for independent play. Enhance the exploration by putting small felt squares on a table with the figure toys to encourage play that involves one square per toy (one-to-one correspondence).

Another way to promote toddlers’ problem-solving skills is to provide materials that are typically located in a different area of the room. Example: Put some dolls and dishes in the building (block) area for a week and observe children’s reactions. The increased access to the materials may be especially beneficial to toddlers who normally play in an area that does not include the items.

#### Family Child Care

**Materials needed:** Flockmen® wooden figure toys, other assorted small toys as described below

Preschool-age and older children will enjoy Options 1 and 2. Offer other small materials to promote problem-solving skills of children of different ages in your setting. Mobile infants will enjoy opening containers to find a small toy. Wrap familiar toys in paper for infants to discover. Toddlers will enjoy puzzles and pegboards, as well as building with different kinds of blocks. Provide challenge for preschool-age and older children with materials that can be used in different ways, such as geoboards and rubber bands. Also, provide pattern blocks, craft sticks with play dough and small figures.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Executive function

Toddlers observe and describe the *Orange Circle* game of freeze.



#### Key Concepts

Freeze  
Watch  
Remember



#### Materials Needed

Large orange circle (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** Cut a large circle from orange construction paper. Arrange for an adult to help you with the activity.

**BEGIN:** [*Invite 4–6 toddlers to watch you freeze your body.*]

Sometimes we play a game of freezing our body. Let's remember what it means to freeze.

**ASK:** How do we freeze our body?

[*Build on toddlers' responses to describe how we stop what we are doing and hold our body still. Invite a toddler to demonstrate.*]

**EXPLAIN:** I want to show you a freeze game that uses an orange circle. Our game is called *Orange Circle*. (Name of helper) is holding an orange circle.

I will clap my hands when I see the orange circle and (name of helper) says "orange circle." I will freeze my arms and hands when I cannot see the orange circle.

I am going to watch the orange circle carefully. The orange circle tells me what to do.

**ACT:** [*Demonstrate clapping your hands when the helper holds up the orange circle and says "orange circle." Hold your arms and hands still when the helper puts the orange circle behind his/her back. You may wish to be silly with your clapping action but always watch the circle in this first demonstration. This should be a fun activity!*]

- ASK:**
- Why do I need to always keep my eyes on the orange circle during this game?
  - (Name of helper) said "orange circle" when he/she held up the orange circle. Did he/she say anything when he/she hid the orange circle?
  - What did I remember to do when I could not see the orange circle? (freeze arms and hands)

**EXPLAIN:** I am going to practice playing *Orange Circle* one more time. Please watch me carefully. Let me know if I do not keep my eyes on the orange circle.

**ACT:** [*Helper holds up orange circle and says "orange circle." Clap your hands. After several seconds, pretend you are distracted by something in the room or are looking around the room while clapping. Helper puts the orange circle behind his/her back, but you*]

**Option 1 continued**

*continue to clap. Continue clapping and looking elsewhere until toddlers point out the orange circle is no longer visible; your arms and hands should be still.]*

**ASK:** What did I forget to do? (watch orange circle)

**RECAP:** *Orange Circle* is a fun game. Let's remember how it works.

*[Encourage toddlers to describe the game. Emphasize the importance of watching the orange circle. The helper does not say anything when the orange circle goes away. Also emphasize the importance of remembering what to do.]*



## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Executive function

Toddlers participate in a game of *Orange Circle*.



#### Key Concepts

Freeze  
Watch  
Remember



#### Materials Needed

Large orange circle (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Cognitive  
Physical/Health

**Be Prepared:** This activity is for toddlers who are familiar with the *Orange Circle* game through participation in Option 1 or a similar introduction. Cut a large circle from orange construction paper. Arrange for an adult to help you with the activity.

Invite 4–6 toddlers to play the *Orange Circle* game of freeze. Open the session by encouraging toddlers to describe how the game works (see Option 1). Build on their descriptions and emphasize the importance of watching the orange circle and remembering what to do when we see (clap) and do not see (freeze) the orange circle.

Lead toddlers in a round of the game by demonstrating the actions and offering verbal support as appropriate. Offer several more rounds in which you do not demonstrate actions. Provide verbal support if needed. Toddlers are not expected to clap in unison.

Conclude the activity by encouraging toddlers to describe their experiences. Emphasize the importance of paying attention and remembering what to do. Invite toddlers to tell what part of the game is hardest to do.

#### What to Look For—Options 1–2

This simple game offers practice in important aspects of self-regulation: paying attention, remembering what to do, and holding arms and hands in a still position. Watch toddlers' approaches to each of these tasks and offer verbal support or demonstrations as needed. This is one reason it is helpful to have another adult help with the activity, including Option 2.

The importance of watching the circle in *Orange Circle* differs from the importance of listening carefully to music in the *Freeze Game* offered in Block 9. *Orange Circle* includes an announcement as a supplement to the presentation of the circle. The absence of an announcement when the circle is hidden emphasizes the role of watching carefully.

Some toddlers will find it challenging to hold their arms and hands still. Positively acknowledge their efforts. To stop clapping when the orange circle disappears is a sign of good progress in developing the self-regulation skills promoted in this game.

You may find that a sitting position works best for toddlers in Option 2.



### More Scaffolding Tips—Options 1–2

**Extra support** ■ If a toddler(s) mentions the earlier freeze game involving music, respond enthusiastically to his/her recollection. Remind toddlers that in the game we played before, we listened carefully to music. In *Orange Circle*, we watch the circle. ■ In Option 2, sit close to a toddler who finds it difficult to stop clapping when the orange circle is hidden. Provide quiet coaching and encourage the toddler to do what you do.

**Enrichment** ■ In a second round of the game in Option 2, provide a visual cue only for clapping by omitting the “orange circle” announcement when the orange circle is shown. ■ In Option 2, invite toddlers to clap high, clap low, and clap to the sides.

#### Interest Area

**Materials needed:** large orange circle

Invite several toddlers to play the *Orange Circle* game. Encourage toddlers to take turns holding up the orange circle and then placing it behind their back. Participate enthusiastically with the toddlers as they play the game.

#### Family Child Care

**Materials needed:** large orange circle

Invite older toddlers and preschool-age and older children to take turns managing the circle in Option 2. Babies and younger toddlers will enjoy watching children clap and then freeze.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 1 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Awareness of emotions

A toddler participates in a book sharing focused on different feelings experienced by a little fox.



#### Key Concepts

Love  
Feeling



#### Materials Needed

*I Love You Because You're You* by Liza Baker



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Cognitive

**BEGIN:** [Invite a toddler to read a book about a mama fox and her little fox.]

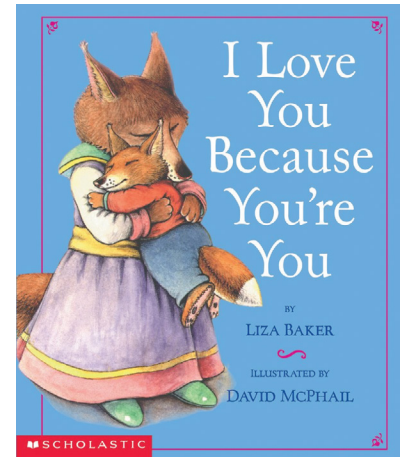
Our book is about a mama fox who loves her little fox.

[Show book cover. Point to the mama and little fox.]

**ASK:** Here is Mama Fox. Here is Little Fox.

- What are they doing? (hugging)
- Why do you think they are hugging each other?

**ACT:** Mama Fox and Little Fox love each other! Let's find out more about the mama and her little fox.



[Use the following strategies to emphasize Little Fox's different feelings:

- Draw attention to facial expressions that communicate feelings. Examples: "Little Fox is eating a cookie that his mama made. Look at his face. What do you think he is feeling?" "Little Fox has tears in his eyes. What do you think he is feeling?"
- Define novel words, including feelings. Example: "Bashful means feeling shy."
- Describe and ask about situations associated with feelings. Examples:
  - "Little Fox is sad because his toy is broken."
  - "A new friend has come to visit. Why do you think Little Fox is hiding behind his mother? What is he feeling?"
  - "Mama Fox is making Little Fox get ready for bed. Does Little Fox want to go to bed? What do you think Little Fox is feeling?"

**RECAP:** Little Fox had many different feelings. What are some of the ways Little Fox felt in our story? Did Mama Fox ever stop loving Little Fox? (no!)

**Option 1 continued****👁️ What to Look For—Option 1**

A one-to-one setting for sharing this book will help you tune into a toddler’s understanding of the range of feelings explored in the story and his/her reactions to the story’s events and messages. Toddlers differ in their awareness of and interest in different emotions. Give more attention to Little Fox’s situations and feelings that seem to be of particular interest to the toddler. The Recap question of what feelings Little Fox experienced in the story is intended to support the toddler in recalling the book’s attention to feelings of interest to the toddler. It is not expected that a toddler will recall the full range of feelings described in the book.

**📈 More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

**Extra support** ■ Point to specific features of facial expressions in the illustrations. The facial expressions of animals can be more challenging to explore than human faces. ■ Draw attention to Little Fox’s body posture in the discussion of feeling proud. Example: “Little Fox is holding his head high and his face looks happy. He is feeling proud.”

**Enrichment** ■ Ask and talk about Mama Fox’s reactions to Little Fox and situations in the story. Example: “Mama Fox is holding her ears. Why do you think she is holding her ears?” (does not like Little Fox’s screams and shouts)





## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 One-to-One



#### Skill and Goal

##### Awareness of emotions

A toddler recalls and talks about different feelings experienced by a little fox in a book sharing.



#### Key Concepts

Feeling



#### Materials Needed

*I Love You Because You're You* by Liza Baker



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Cognitive

**Be Prepared:** This is a follow-up activity for a toddler who has participated in Option 1.

Invite a toddler to help you remember what happened in the book read together recently. Sit next to the toddler so each of you can hold the book and turn pages.

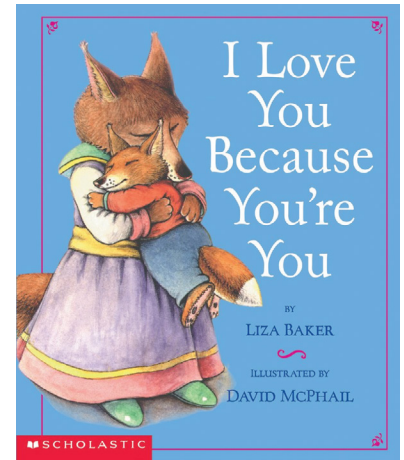
Select and adapt one of the following basic ways to approach the activity: (1) look at each page and encourage the toddler to tell what happened, or (2) look at pages that show situations you anticipate are of special interest to the toddler.

Support the toddler in being the teller of situations that occur in the story. Use open-ended questions to support the toddler's descriptions, with a focus on feelings experienced by Little Fox:

- What is happening in this picture?
- What do you think Little Fox is feeling?
- How does the picture tell us what Little Fox is feeling?

When appropriate, use a closed-ended (yes/no) question to help a toddler focus on a specific aspect of a situation or emotion. A closed-ended question can help set the stage for an open-ended question. Example: "Do you think Little Fox is feeling happy or sad? Why?"

Review as much of the story as the toddler wishes. Conclude the session by enthusiastically acknowledging the toddler's efforts in remembering and telling what happened in the story.



### 👁️ What to Look For—Option 2

Offer generous help in describing a situation that a toddler does not remember. Each situation in the story can be explored on its own. The activity's primary focus is a toddler's awareness of different feelings, how they are communicated (mostly facial expressions), and the reason(s) for Little Fox's feeling. A secondary focus is support for recall and language skills.

Toddlers will differ in their interest in and readiness to talk about feelings represented in the story. Basic feelings of happy and sad will be easier to explore than more nuanced emotions, such as bashful. Similar to Option 1, focus on emotions of interest to the toddler. It is not necessary for a toddler to become familiar with all emotions explored in the book. It also is not

**Option 2 continued**

necessary for all aspects of a situation to be described. What's important is how a situation is connected to an emotion Little Fox is communicating.

If a toddler shows no recollection of the book, promptly transition to Option 1 or a combination of Option 1 and the current option. Perhaps the biggest challenge of the activity is remembering that your role is to support the toddler in being the teller of situations in the story.

 **More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2**

**Extra support** ■ Remind the toddler, maybe with a question, that Mama Fox loved Little Fox no matter what Little Fox did.

**Enrichment** ■ Ask how Little Fox might have felt if the situation were different. Example: "Do you think Little Fox would have felt scared if he could see all the way down the stairs?"

**Interest Area**

**Materials needed:** *I Love You Because You're You* by Liza Baker, paper and crayons or markers

Place the book and drawing materials on a low table. Remind toddlers that Little Fox had many different feelings in our story. Would a little child show a feeling the same way Little Fox shows a feeling? Invite a toddler to select a book picture of interest and draw his/her own picture of how a person would show the feeling experienced by Little Fox. Example: "You turned to the picture of Little Fox looking down the dark stairs. He is scared. Would you like to draw a picture of a little child who is scared of something?" Offer to write a toddler's words on the front or back of his/her picture.

**Family Child Care**

**Materials needed:** *I Love You Because You're You* by Liza Baker, paper and crayons or markers, book-making supplies including a cover and binding of pages

Babies may enjoy holding a teddy bear or other stuffed animal during Option 1. A preschool-age or older child may enjoy participating in Option 2 with you. Adapt the Interest Area suggestion by inviting a preschool-age or older child to draw a picture about a time that he/she felt an emotion similar to what Little Fox is experiencing.



## 24–36 Months

Option 1  
Informal Gathering

## Skill and Goal

## Gross motor development

Toddlers explore and practice kicking a ball.



## Key Concepts

Kick



## Materials Needed

Toddler-size balls—1 per toddler (see Be Prepared)



## Also Promotes

Cognitive

**Be Prepared:** Most toddlers have the balance and coordination to stand, lift one foot, and kick a ball by 24 months of age. For many toddlers, important physical and cognitive tasks are to align one's body with the ball and figure out how hard to kick the ball.

Secure balls made of soft material, such as low-density foam, that are approximately 6–8 inches in diameter. Adult sports balls are too heavy and large for toddlers to manage with success.

Prepare an area for ball play in a large room for gross motor play or use an outdoor play area away from play equipment. In some rooms, it is feasible to have ball activities in a designated area by moving furnishings and toys.

Determine a plan for (a) where toddlers will stand when kicking, (b) the direction balls will be kicked, (c) whether toddlers will take turns kicking (so you can pay attention to each toddler), and (d) how toddlers will retrieve the balls they kick, such as waiting for everyone to kick before picking up a ball.

**BEGIN:** *[Invite 2–4 toddlers to join you to practice kicking balls.]*

**EXPLAIN:** We have one ball for each friend. Each of us will play with one ball. Let's talk about where we can kick our balls.

*[Describe the space for playing ball. Example: "We will play with balls on the blue rug. Balls will stay in this part of our room." Walk around the perimeter of the space alone or with toddlers, if appropriate.]*

*Describe the plan you created for where toddlers stand, which direction balls are to be kicked, when to kick a ball, and how we retrieve kicked balls (see Be Prepared). Emphasize how the plan keeps everyone safe.]*

**ACT:** *[Place one ball directly in front of each toddler. Let the toddlers know they can begin kicking the balls. Remind toddlers of the plan for practicing our kicking.]*

*Describe each toddler's actions and respond to each toddler's reactions with enthusiasm. Example: "Riley, your ball rolled all the way to the wall. You sure look happy!"*

*Remind toddlers to put the ball right in front of their feet when they practice kicking. Acknowledge a toddler's coordination efforts in relation to the ball. Example: "Jordan, you moved your ball right in front of you when it was off to the side. You kicked the ball straight into the play yard!"*

*Offer the following types of assistance when appropriate:*

- *Break down the kicking skill. Encourage a toddler to first stand on one foot and then kick.*

**Option 1 continued**

- *If a toddler is not well balanced when kicking, kneel next to him/her and offer your hand as added support.*
- *If the ball is not rolling well, reposition the ball directly in front of the toddler.*
- *If a toddler is kicking the ball too hard, describe and perhaps demonstrate softer kicks.*

*Offer as many kicking rounds as time and toddler interest support. Some toddlers may leave the activity and others may join.]*

**RECAP:** *[Invite toddlers to sit with you, holding their ball in their lap or on the floor between their knees. As if you are telling a story, describe the good time you all had kicking. Describe each toddler's efforts. Encourage toddlers to talk about what it is like to kick a ball.]*

**👁️ What to Look For—Option 1**

ELM's activities with balls are designed to promote large muscle strength and coordinate motor movements with vision and results. Example: Kicking a ball fosters understanding of distance, for example. Your assistance to toddlers in this activity is likely to focus mostly on different aspects of their body control, including thinking about an action before doing it (known as motor planning). Ball kicking without supervision is not recommended for toddlers.

Keeping this informal gathering small will help you pay attention to each toddler's kicking skill and provide appropriate one-to-one support. Some toddlers may be ready for more challenge (see Enrichment tips), whereas others may need specific guidance on how to kick a ball. As with all activities, it is important to build on a child's existing skills and to bolster confidence if it seems lacking, especially among toddlers with few related motor experiences to build upon.

Avoid setting up any kind of competition or score keeping, offering comments that compare toddlers' skills, and showing more enthusiasm for one toddler's efforts than you communicate for others. Celebrate each child's emerging skill and success!

Offer the activity to each toddler in your room. Some toddlers may be eager to kick balls and consistently return to a ball-kicking activity. Seek out toddlers who may be hesitant to participate due to engagement in another activity. Your encouragement and individualized adaptations can help a lot here. Examples: If Imani does not want to leave bunny play, invite the toddler to put the bunny near the kicking area to watch. If a toddler is pretending to be a firefighter, explain it is time for the firefighters to kick the ball. The toddler may wish to wear his/her fire hat during the ball activity.

A toddler who has little experience with ball play may begin by simply putting a ball into a doll stroller to push. Another toddler may feel at ease rolling the ball back and forth with you as a beginning experience with a ball. Invite two toddlers with similar ball-kicking skills to join you for a playful game. Developing confidence and skill go hand in hand. Present a ball activity in a manner that is fun for each toddler!

**Option 1 continued****More Scaffolding Tips—Option 1**

**Extra support** ■ Offer verbal and hands-on support for placing a ball directly in front of a toddler's kicking leg after the first kick. ■ Encourage a toddler to stand with his/her feet slightly apart for improved balance. ■ Describe the strength of a toddler's kick and how far the ball traveled. Example: "You kicked the ball to the play house." ■ Mark a kicking spot with a carpet square for a toddler who finds it challenging to stay in one area.

**Enrichment** ■ Encourage a toddler to say where the ball rolled. ■ Invite a toddler to kick a ball toward a target, such as into a box turned on its side. ■ Support motor skills by inviting toddlers to put balls in a ball bag at the conclusion of the session. ■ At the end of the session (see Recap), invite toddlers to make sounds by tapping their balls.



## 24–36 Months

### Option 2 Informal Gathering



#### Skill and Goal

##### Gross motor development

Toddlers practice kicking the same ball 2–3 times.



#### Key Concepts

Kick



#### Materials Needed

Toddler-size balls—1 per toddler (see Be Prepared)



#### Also Promotes

Communication/Language  
Cognitive

**Be Prepared:** This activity is for toddlers who can readily kick a ball placed in front of them. Watching a child’s participation in Option 1 is one way to informally determine a toddler’s kicking skill. Secure balls made of soft material, such as low-density foam, that are approximately 6–8 inches in diameter. Offer the activity in a large indoor or outdoor space that is safe for gross motor activity.

Invite two toddlers to each kick a ball and then run after the ball to kick it again. Explain the activity and show the space boundaries for playing with a ball. You may wish for the two toddlers to take turns kicking their ball 2–3 times, so you can watch and support each child. This arrangement also enables a toddler to use the space by himself/herself and to watch a peer’s efforts.

Encourage the toddlers to run after their ball and wait for it to stop before kicking it again. Remind toddlers to stand in front of the ball or to move the ball so it is right in front of their legs. Consider using a “Ready. Set. Go.” prompt so toddlers know when to first kick their ball. It is helpful if you run with each toddler, offering encouragement and verbal support. The Option 1 suggestions of types of help a toddler may need are pertinent to this activity, too.

Describe a toddler’s actions and encourage toddlers to watch each other kick, run after the ball, kick again, run after the ball, and maybe kick again.

#### What to Look For—Option 2

Watch for opportunities to help a toddler follow the ball with his/her eyes as he/she runs, and to position the ball in front of his/her legs by moving body or ball. These tasks make the current activity more challenging than Option 1. The activity is meant to have the feeling of spontaneous play with balls. Providing one ball for each child eliminates possible competition for kicking a ball.

#### More Scaffolding Tips—Option 2

**Extra support** ■ Omit the running part of the activity if this adds excitement that prevents a toddler from focusing on kicking the ball.

**Enrichment** ■ Invite a toddler to kick a ball while it is still moving. ■ For a toddler’s second or third kick, encourage the toddler to kick the ball back toward you.



### Interest Area

**Materials needed:** age-appropriate soft balls, ping-pong balls, spoons, water table, *Twister*® game

Provide balls used in Option 1 for continued practice in kicking if close supervision can be offered. Another approach to the Interest Area is to support fine motor skills. Toddlers will enjoy scooping up ping-pong balls with spoons from the water table. This simple activity supports eye-hand coordination. Add challenge by encouraging a toddler to say in advance which ping-pong ball he/she intends to scoop.

*Twister*® is a game toddlers will enjoy. It will be fun to put one body part on a circle and then switch to a new position. Use simple instructions. Examples: "Put one hand on a circle." "Can you put two feet on two circles?" A toddler may prefer to use the mat on his/her own.



### Family Child Care

**Materials needed:** variety of age-appropriate soft balls, cones

Provide balls for children's indoor or outdoor use under your close supervision. Mobile infants will enjoy rolling a ball. Younger toddlers enjoy carrying a ball(s) from one area to another. Provide just enough help for older toddlers to extend Option 1 by balancing, lifting one foot, and kicking a stationary ball. Preschool-age children enjoy a specific target for kicking a ball. Older children may enjoy setting up a line of cones to move a ball around without using their hands. Balls intended for infant use should not be kicked by other children.